

TEACHING STRATEGIES FOR ENGLISH LEARNERS

LEARNING SUPPORT ACTIVITIES • TEACHER RESOURCE

English Learners (ELs) benefit from instruction that makes both English and American Sign Language accessible. Effective teaching combines visual supports, explicit vocabulary instruction, meaningful interaction, and opportunities to build confidence while maintaining high academic expectations.

Use Visual Instruction

- Model signs before independent practice.
- Use pictures, illustrations, videos, and demonstrations.
- Display lesson vocabulary visually.
- Reinforce learning with gestures and real-world examples.

Teach Vocabulary Explicitly

- Introduce new English and ASL vocabulary together when appropriate.
- Pre-teach key vocabulary before beginning a lesson.
- Review vocabulary frequently through multiple activities.
- Connect new vocabulary to prior knowledge.

Provide Clear & Accessible Instruction

- Use simple, clear language when giving directions.
- Pair written English with ASL demonstrations.
- Break multi-step tasks into smaller parts.
- Check frequently for understanding.

Encourage Communication

- Provide structured partner and small-group activities.
- Encourage students to ask questions.
- Create a classroom culture where mistakes are part of learning.
- Allow additional processing time before expecting responses.

Build Confidence

- Recognize student progress regularly.
- Celebrate multilingual abilities as strengths.
- Encourage participation without creating unnecessary pressure.
- Maintain high expectations while providing appropriate support.

ASL Classroom Considerations

- Focus on ASL learning objectives rather than English proficiency whenever appropriate.
- Provide multiple ways for students to demonstrate learning.
- Incorporate visual and interactive activities throughout instruction.
- Build on each student's language and cultural experiences.

★ Key Takeaway

English Learners thrive when instruction is visual, interactive, and language-rich. By making English and ASL accessible while maintaining the same learning objectives, teachers create an inclusive environment where every student has the opportunity to succeed.